

SWIMMING EASTER ISLAND

**SARAH FERGUSON'S WORLD-FIRST
CIRCUMNAVIGATION OF RAPA NUI**

by
JOHN MCCARTHY



Published by Plastic Oceans International

First published in The Republic of South Africa in November 2019.
Published in the United States of America in December 2019.

Copyright © John McCarthy 2019

Cover images © John McCarthy, Erik Aleynikov, Tod Hardin

Designed by Jon Ivins | the Brand Brewery

All rights reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, or transmitted,
in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing
of the publisher.

A CIP catalogue copy of this publication is available from The National
Library of South Africa in Pretoria (Tshwane), Gauteng Province.

U.S. Library of Congress Control Number: 2019919568

ISBN 978-0-620-84404-8 (ebook)

ISBN 978-0-620-84403-1 (printed version)

Printed and bound in the United States
by Color House Graphics, Inc, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Printed on paper from responsible sources.

SwimmingEasterIsland.com

PlasticOceans.org

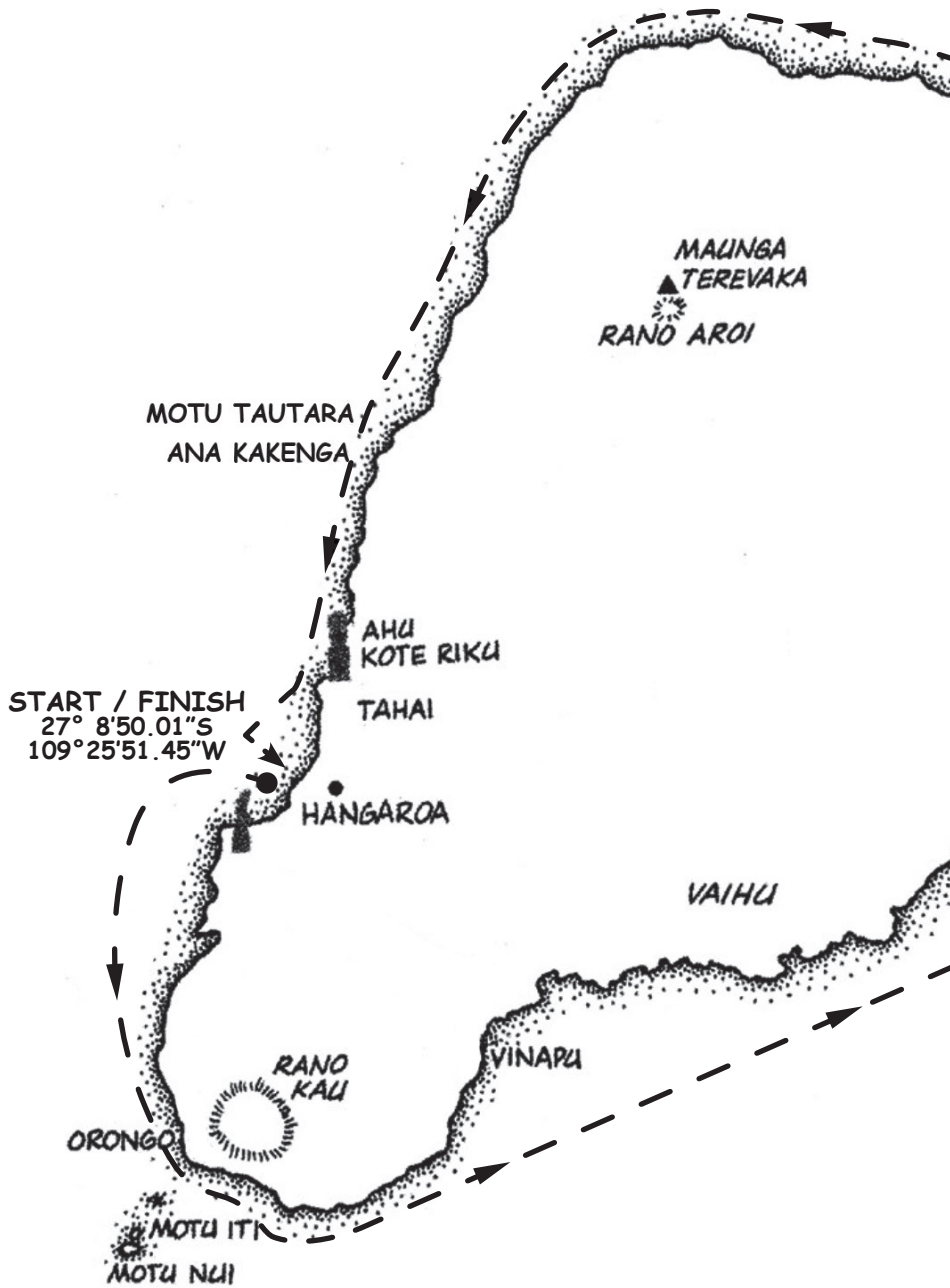
For all the eco-warriors

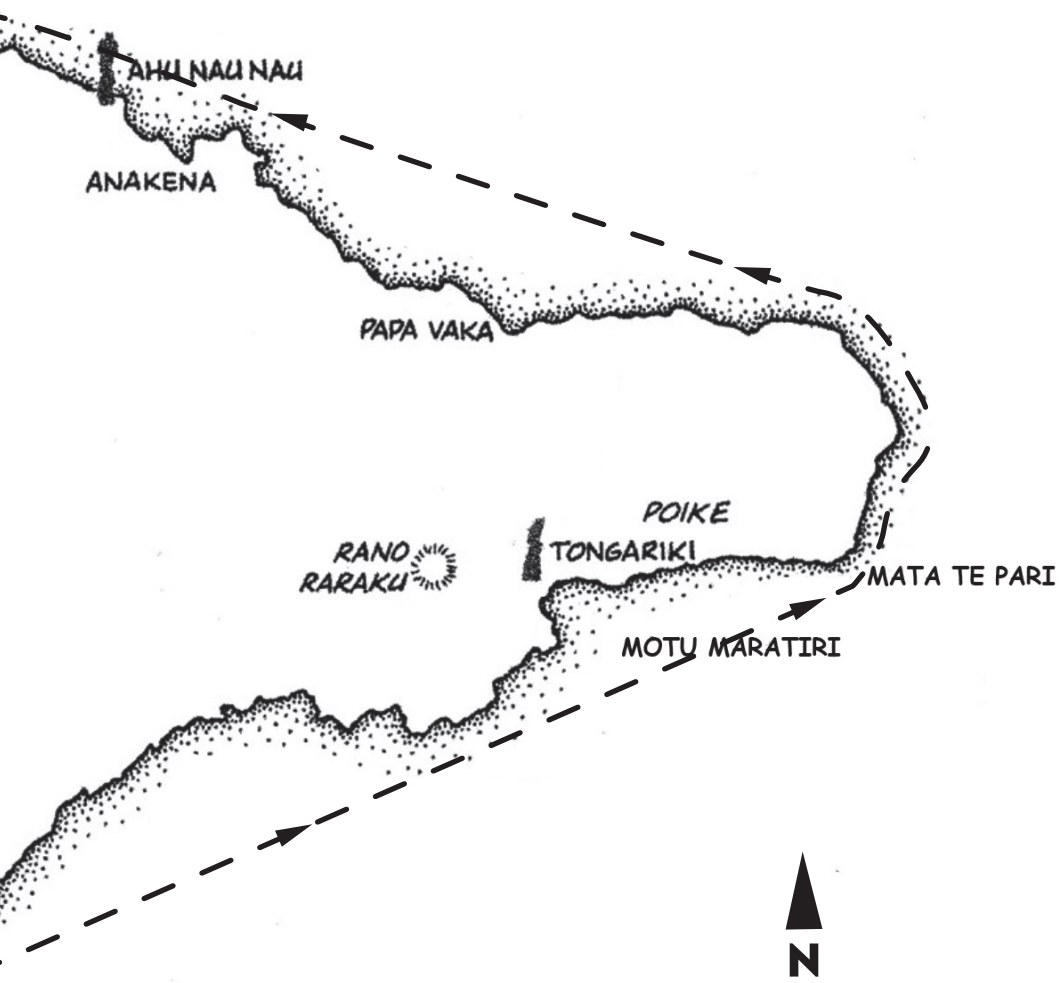
Contents

Prologue	11
Map	12
The end	15
Live deeply, tread lightly	19
Wiping the slate clean	25
The <i>umu tahu</i>	31
Showtime	35
Mataverī	39
The three bays	43
Tongariki	49
Mata Te Pari - Watching The Whitecaps	51
Anakena	55
The darkness	57
The beautiful people	63
<i>Tataku Vave</i> - Counting The Waves	65
Tears in the moonlight	69
Maunga Terevaka	73
Acknowledgements and thanks	77
Sponsors	83

Prologue

Four thousand people have climbed Mount Everest, two thousand people have swum the English Channel, twelve people have walked on the moon; only one person has successfully swum non-stop around Easter Island, or Rapa Nui, as it is known to the local inhabitants. Rapa Nui is politically part of Chile, but due to its isolation from the mainland, it has retained its own cultural identity and even has its own language. This is an eyewitness account of Sarah Ferguson's epic swim around the island, which was completed at 3:15am, on Saturday, March 16, 2019, local Rapa Nui time.





The end

Sarah Ferguson has just swum sixty-three kilometres non-stop in a little over nineteen hours. She is exhausted. Twenty minutes previously, we were administering glycerine and a non-steroidal bronchodilator to try to keep her throat open, the prolonged effect of exposure to high salinity having taken its toll. Sarah Houston, her coach, has been swimming uninterrupted with her for the last ten kilometres. Before that, she was administering feeds every half hour and had already swum at least five kilometres in stages, so she's swum around fifteen kilometres herself on this day. The Chilean navy has closed the port because of the giant surf. No shipping allowed in or out until it subsides. They radio us and urge us to abandon the swim and allow them to ferry us back to land on the special naval vessel that has been deployed to keep us safe. I peer into the darkness and see volleys of foam exploding off the rocks. I can hear a man with an American accent shouting through the darkness.

“Go Sarah, you can do this!”

I can't tell if it is Tod, William or Jeff, but it is a reminder of just how close we are to reaching shore.

It is bitter sweet. We've come so far and we're so close, but it seems like the ultimate objective is just out of reach.

In good conscience, I know I'm incapable of guiding the two Sarahs

SWIMMING EASTER ISLAND

safely across the reef in the early hours of the morning with a giant swell running, especially after a swim of this magnitude. I can't see properly, and my nerves are screwed to the snapping point. In the harbour, I can see the ambulance waiting, lights flashing, a morbid beacon of impending disaster...